

One Wedding and a Funeral (and a Separation)

Peter Gardiner

It's hard to know where to start so I guess I'll start at the beginning!

My interest in Imps stems from my grandfather's vehicle, more specifically, his Imp EPP 16G, a 1968 Singer Chamois Coupé. Grandpa (Syd Wilson) purchased the car in March 1987 and owned it until 1998. I remember, as a child, him occasionally coming to Sunday lunch in the Singer and always wanting to be taken out in it when we visited him! In 1998 Syd, at age 79, and after two hip replacements, decided that it was time to give *EPP* up. At the time, I was 17 and would have loved *EPP* to come my way. Alas, it wasn't to be. *EPP* instead made its way to Brighton – and for good reason. Brighton was home to James Chisholm who had helped to lead my grandfather astray in the Imping world and to whom I shall be forever grateful! The pair's acquaintance and subsequent friendship led to *EPP* having a full blown 998 cc engine with twin Dellorto carbs, among other mods. My grandmother used to say that when the car started up in the garage it shook the whole house! Surely a sign of a quality car?

With the car now in Brighton, Grandpa and I visited James and I was able to exchange contact details with him and drool over *EPP* once again. It was a surprise, when in 2000 I was offered *EPP* by James, minus the 998 engine, which he had replaced with an 875 cc engine. I of course snatched his hand off and arranged to go and collect it. I drove the car from Brighton to South-East London to my grandfather's house in torrential rain; the first time *EPP* had seen rain in 13 years! Grandpa was thrilled to see the car again. The following day I returned to Coventry where *EPP* now resides.

While in my ownership, *EPP* has undergone a full bare-metal restoration and I have returned a freshly built 998 cc engine running twin 40 Weber carbs to the engine bay. I have also fitted a modern wiring loom including a fuse box. The brakes and suspension have all been upgraded and the interior restored too.



Young Nathan checks the Revolution centre caps are tight!
Photo: Dan Frampton



Shortly after *EPP* had been resprayed, in 2006, Syd sadly died. I made it my goal that the car would make an appearance at his funeral. I spent the next ten evenings and the weekend in the garage getting her ready. With help from friends, and Jeff from IMPtechnic, she was

on the road. We made the trip from Coventry to South-East London with no problems. The return journey was a different story – we made it home eventually, courtesy of the RAC!

Since then the car has been finished to what I think is a very high standard. The biggest event it has attended since being completed was my wedding in 2010. I used the car to get myself to the church and then roared off with Kathryn, my new bride, from the church to the reception venue. Our photographer, Graham Emery, followed us and we stopped for some super shots of us and the car on a quiet Warwickshire country lane. *EPP* was a highlight of the day for many, the photographer commenting that it was quite rare for the groom to drive a car away from the church.

Since then, *EPP* has sadly not had much use but she does get used now and again. 2011 didn't

see me make it to any of the Imp Club events due to holidays and the birth of our first child coinciding with the events. Next year I am hoping to get out and about in it a lot more and maybe even make an area centre meeting once in a while. I must also get around to fitting a car seat so our daughter, Anna, can come too!

My other Imp-related distraction has been the acquisition and restoration of an Imp Van which has taken a lot of time to get roadworthy after a substantial lay-up – oh, and getting rid of the black paint it had been sprayed at some time in its life – too many hearse jokes came my way for it to stay black



**Peter and
mother-in-law Margaret**
Photo: Kathryn Gardiner



EPP's finest hour!
Photo: Graham Emery

Kathryn and Peter
Photo: Graham Emery



Beautiful!

Photo: Graham Emery



for any length of time! Anyway, that's a story for another time. Next I'm on the lookout for a yellow Imp for Anna. Although she's only eleven weeks old at the time of writing I feel it's not too early to start looking!

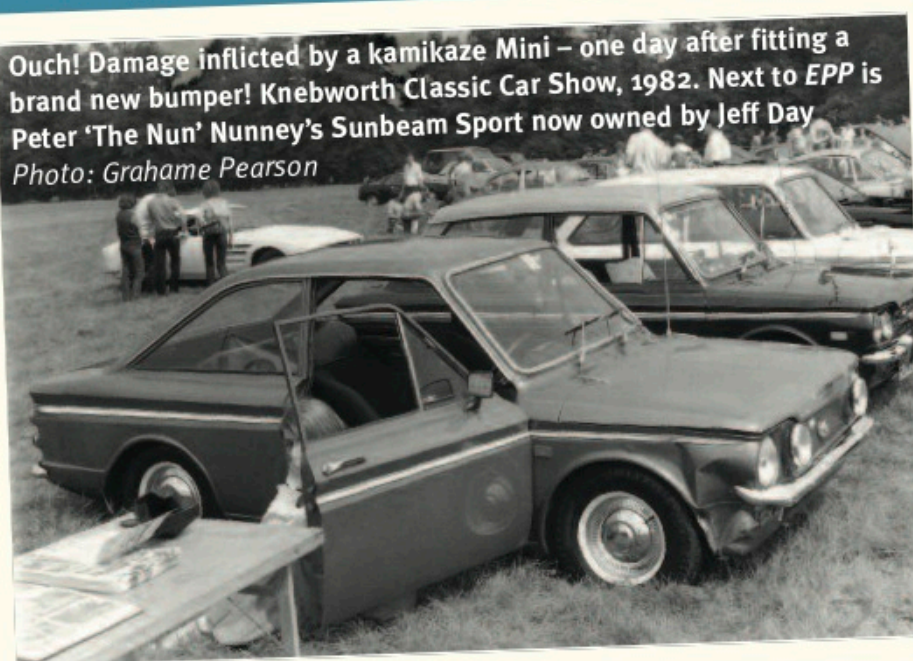
A postscript from Editor Grahame...

It was wonderful to receive Peter's e-mail a few weeks ago. I owned EPP (that's E-P-P, not Epp by the way!) back in the early 'eighties. I knew Peter had bought the car. What I didn't know was how well she had been restored, a credit to Jeff Day of IMPtechnic.

Thirty-one years ago EPP became my third Imp and my first restoration project. I bought her for £100 in a bodily sound but barely running state, having been off the road for some years. Perhaps inevitably, on the journey home to Purley from Banbury the head gasket failed. Thankfully Imp guru and near-neighbour John Simister had accompanied me as we had half-expected the car not to make it back under its own steam (!) and he towed EPP the rest of the journey with his Alfasud 1.2 Ti.

Over the next few months I rebuilt the engine to Sport spec, most parts being bought from RJ Grimes (remember them?), TransSpeed and Dutche Components, fitted a rally-dash with Stiletto dials (extending all the various underdash wires with white wire – well, it

Ouch! Damage inflicted by a kamikaze Mini – one day after fitting a brand new bumper! Knebworth Classic Car Show, 1982. Next to EPP is Peter 'The Nun' Nunney's Sunbeam Sport now owned by Jeff Day
Photo: Grahame Pearson



was my first resto!), rally bucket seats, 13" steering wheel, spot-lights – anyway, you get the idea! The suspension was lowered with Monte Carlo springs and, after several enjoyable months on the road, I fitted a new O/S door skin and O/S rear wheel arch (the only rust on her) and

resprayed her. I kept the colour original – Turquoise Metallic has to be one of the best Rootes colours. I also fitted a Sport engine lid (I still have the original non-louvred lid in my garage!).

EPP served as everyday transport until 1985 when I bought a Clan Crusader and sold her to Neil Fraser. Apart from a fuel pump failure she never let me down (a motor factor 50 yards away had a new pump in stock and I was mobile again in ten minutes!). I also used her extensively for production car trials, thinking nothing of changing the lowered springs back to standard for each event!

So, why the 'Separation' in the title of this article? Well, of all the Imps I have owned and sold, EPP is the one I regret parting with the most. I am extremely happy that she is now owned by someone who clearly knows how to look after her. Grahame



1982, Kingston-upon-Thames:
EPP resplendent in her new coat
of Turquoise Metallic cellulose
Photo: Grahame Pearson



With their rear engines giving superb traction, Imps have
always excelled at production car trials (PCTs). Driver:
Grahame Pearson, co-driver/bouncer: Jon Shortland
Photo: unknown